

CALIFORNIA PITCH CANKER TASK FORCE

California Forest Pest Council
A 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation



The Mission of the Pitch Canker Task Force is to develop short and long term guidelines for managing pitch canker in Monterey pine forests and elsewhere; define research, management, and education priorities for pitch canker, secure support for proposed activities, and allocate resources to implement guidelines and recommendations

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STATE TASK FORCE GIVES GUIDELINES FOR CHRISTMAS TREE PURCHASE AND DISPOSAL TO PROTECT CALIFORNIA PINES

CAMBRIA, CALIFORNIA, December 10, 2003 -- California residents are being advised by a statewide task force to take precautions when purchasing and disposing of Christmas trees this year to help control the spread of pitch canker, an incurable disease that has killed thousands of Monterey pine trees.

Pitch canker, a non-native tree disease, causes dieback and mortality in native and ornamental pine trees. It may also infect Monterey pine Christmas trees. While every attempt is made to sell only disease-free Christmas trees, some trees could harbor the disease without showing symptoms. "Our concern," explained Steve Staub, Chairman of the California Pitch Canker Task Force, "is that the disease could be transported to areas of the state that don't have pitch canker. And since there is no known cure for pitch canker, limiting its spread is the key to prevention."

The disease is present in 19 coastal and adjacent inland California counties from Mendocino to San Diego on Monterey and bishop pines. As yet, the disease has not been found in the Sierra Nevada. It does not infect humans, pets or other plants.

Concern for pitch canker should not stop citizens from purchasing a Monterey pine Christmas tree. Some simple precautions will help prevent the spread of pitch canker:

1. Purchase and dispose of Monterey pine Christmas trees locally. Don't transport them long distances.
2. Preferred methods of disposal include:
 - dispose of the tree promptly through a local recycling program, or
 - dispose at a local landfill which either buries or composts greenwaste, or
 - chip the tree and either compost the chips or use them as a mulch around your home
3. If you choose a live Monterey pine and decide to keep it, purchase it locally and do not transport it outside the area.

For further information, contact your local Agricultural Commissioner's office or look at the California Pitch Canker Task Force Web site http://frap.cdf.ca.gov/pitch_canker/.

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